

TempePRE

BLOG

Following a child's lead

"I wish I could be a flamingo and fly over the mountains and go swimming on the beach!" said a 4-year-old boy wishing on a star. Children have fascinating imaginations and learn so many skills through imaginative play. They also build confidence and a sense of ownership when we support their imagination and encourage them to expand their ideas. You might be surprised how one small idea can turn into a whole new world of exploring and discovering that may have never been achieved if you hadn't followed the child's lead.

After studying the differences between living and non-living things, the children in my classroom really took an interest in all things. Where animals live, different types of animals, and so on. This eventually led to a conversation about pet stores and how they wished we could have one in our classroom. At that moment, I knew we had to make it happen. When children are interested in something, they absorb so much information and *want* to learn more. That day we cleared out a corner in the classroom and got to work. The children had so many great ideas! What pets to include, what accessories and food items we would need, the various jobs they would need at the pet store, and even got creative when we didn't have exactly what they envisioned. Such as, small crafting pom poms for dog and cat toys, instruments instead of real grooming tools, and so much more. This imaginative play naturally leads to children practicing math skills, social emotional skills, and even science and social study skills!

Not only did following the children's lead in this moment lead to a variety of learning opportunities, but it also encouraged the children to continue to use their imagination and that I trusted their ideas. This built confidence within the children and showed them that their ideas matter. A skill that is hard to teach but can be fostered through scenarios just like this. Following your child's lead every now and then, and diving into their world of imagination, can be an endless opportunity for learning, fostering confidence and self-worth, and building relationships.

My name is Chelsea Mills (Rimkus) and I have been teaching in the TempePRE program since January 2018. Before that I lived in St. Louis Missouri with my husband, where we are both originally from and where our families are. I am the oldest of nine, and have always known that teaching was my calling and that motherhood would be the ultimate cherry on top. I am so grateful to be following my dreams as a preschool teacher, and to be expecting our first child this fall. Teaching during a pandemic has had its challenges, but I feel very fortunate to still have my job and be able to continue to be there for my kiddos during this time.



We are here to help you navigate the Tempe PRE program.

Please contact us for assistance 480-858-7735

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Tempe PRE is a program of the City of Tempe, in partnership with the Tempe Elementary School District.